

## SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN EAST ASIA: THE U.S. ROLE

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**SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN EAST ASIA: THE U.S. ROLE**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Emerging as an engine of the global economy, the East Asia region has become strategically far more important to the United States. Changes in U.S. security alliance policy can produce considerable strategic realignments. The Janus-like face of China's rise has become a source of increasing anxiety. Parochial nationalism in China, Japan, and South Korea could create new security issues. The nuclear threats from North Korea necessitate the United States to maintain strong military presence and to pursue strategic dialogues through the Six-Party Talks. Along with the strong bilateral security alliances with Japan and South Korea, the United States should be also engaged in non-traditional security efforts to revive economic growth and affluence. Continuous economic growth, stability, and open markets are critical for the region. Washington should reaffirm the increasing expectations of allies, partners, and potential competitors in the region. Strong commitment and leadership by Washington can redefine and reshape alternative security architectures in this dynamic region. Vigorous pursuit of openness, inclusion, and mutual prosperity will both promote U.S. leadership and advance economic growth and collective security mechanism in the region.





## SECURITY ARCHITECTURE IN EAST ASIA: THE U.S. ROLE

The current U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) highlights that U.S. alliances with Japan and South Korea are the bedrock of regional security and a foundation of prosperity in the East Asian region.<sup>1</sup> The NSS further states that, in partnership with our allies, the United States is helping to shape a future of security and integration of all Asian nations and to uphold and extend fundamental rights and dignity to their people. These alliances have preserved a hard-earned peace. It is essential to U.S., Asian, and global security that they remain as dynamic and effective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Less sanguinely, the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) pinpoints that the United States faces a complex and uncertain security landscape in which the pace of change continues to accelerate. The QDR then posits that the rise of China and India in Asia will continue to shape an international system that is no longer easily defined—one in which the United States will remain the most powerful actor but must increasingly work with key allies and partners to sustain stability and peace.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, in *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation*, Joseph S. Nye, Jr. aptly describes the 21<sup>st</sup> century strategic environment as a complex three-dimensional chess game: on the top chessboard of political-military issues, the United States serves as the sole superpower; on the middle board of economic issues, the United States must negotiate with regional powers such as the European Union and China to reach agreements; on the bottom chessboard where transnational relations that cross borders outside the control of governments, power is chaotically dispersed. Nye then concludes that an information revolution has reduced the role of geography and territory, that the region has become rapidly economically interdependent, and that an emerging global

society is increasingly concerned about certain values and human rights issues that cross national frontiers.<sup>4</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> century strategic environment of the East Asian region is at the vortex of global uncertainty. Although elements of continuity framed around American hegemony continue, the overall configuration of power and regional actors' strategic choices portend a new strategic environment in the future. Changes in American alliance policy in the region can produce considerable strategic realignments. The Janus-like face of China's rise can also become a source of increasing anxiety in the region. In the meantime, parochial nationalism in China, Japan, and South Korea could create new security issues.<sup>5</sup> This environment fosters asymmetric conflicts. Advanced information technology will provide complex network systems that can be exploited by non-state aggressors. With its rapidly growing new economic power, China will be playing a more important role in an emerging global society.

A recent report by the Pacific Forum Center for Strategic International Studies identifies four key developments in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>6</sup> First is the region's growing economic and political influence. The region generates 30 percent of global exports; its two-way trade with the United States exceeds \$1 trillion annually. It also holds two-thirds of global foreign exchange reserves. Second is China's rise on a trajectory that has introduced an increasingly self-assured and powerful actor into the strategic mix. China needs a peaceful security environment in order to realize its transformation. The growing strength of China's military has alarmed its neighbors, who also depend on China for their own economic growth. China's military strategy concerns countries that believe Beijing's quest for security is creating insecurity for them. Third is the

emergence of an increasing number of nuclear states and the attendant threat of proliferation. North Korea has already conducted two nuclear tests. China continues to modernize its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities. A regional arms race may be under consideration by Japan and South Korea. Similarly, there are rising concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction technology, materials, and knowhow both to states and to non-state actors. Fourth is an increasing interest in multilateral cooperation. The region now hosts a variety of multilateral political, economic, and security mechanisms. These institutions are incomplete and imperfect; but through acknowledgement of mutual issues, regular political dialogue, and economic integration, they have created a regional nexus in which countries are exploring cooperative approaches to a wide range of security challenges.

Yet, as the region is growing as a central political and economic stakeholder and is already an engine of the global economy, the United States has been focused on the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Now is the time for Washington to redirect its attention and apply more time and resources to the challenges surfacing in East Asia.<sup>7</sup> This paper focuses on the security threats and the U.S. security strategies in the East Asian region. Further, it recommends the roles the United States should play in shaping alternative security architectures for the region.

#### North Korea Nuclear and Security Threats

Since the Korean War in the early 1950s, North Korea has remained a security threat in Northeast Asia. The Korean War ended inconclusively with an armistice, and no formal peace treaty has ever been enacted. This has led to continued tensions between the North and South. These tensions have often escalated into violent conflict: recently there have been naval engagements,<sup>8</sup> the sinking of a South Korean navy

warship, deadly artillery shelling, and cross-border small arms fires between North Korea and South Korea.<sup>9</sup> North Korea's defiance of international conventions on nuclear weapons development as well as its long-range missile tests continue to be major contributors to regional tensions. North Korea has conducted two nuclear weapons tests in the last four years, along with numerous medium- and long-range missile tests. International condemnation of North Korea's actions has led to United Nations sanctions.<sup>10</sup>

Since April 2009 North Korea has refused to re-engage in the Six-Party Talks (with China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States) after being condemned for a long-range missile launch. The Six-Party Talks were initiated in 2003 after North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). North Korea initially agreed to give up its nuclear program in exchange for major aid, for diplomatic ties with the United States and Japan, and for a permanent peace pact on the peninsula.<sup>11</sup> Although the talks have broken down on a number of occasions, the United States and others are currently working to bring North Korea back to the Six-Party Talks. As in the past, further talks will undoubtedly be necessary to bring North Korea back to formal negotiations in a multilateral forum. North Korea's recent announcement of its new uranium enrichment facilities and its deadly artillery shelling of nearby South Korean Yeonpyong Island in Nov 2010 have rendered all these efforts futile.<sup>12</sup>

North Korea's policy to tenaciously develop nuclear weapons is to seek concessions from United States and other regional powers to meet its objective of regime survival. With devastated economic conditions, North Korea would be more

relying on nuclear weapons to keep its regime and to complement its large standing army. These activities have fueled a new debate in Asia about nuclear tipping points and the possible collapse of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). These developments have obviously intensified the nuclear security concerns of many states in the region that had declared no nuclear intentions in the 1960s. If the NPT collapses, these non-nuclear states could reverse their positions. So the nuclear issue has returned to the Asian security agenda. Although nuclear disarmament remains a long-term goal, proliferation poses the near-term challenge. If North Korea is able to take the next technical step and produce a nuclear device that could be fitted to a long-range missile, this ominous development could have a serious impact on Japan — North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs are already influencing Japanese development of a ballistic missile defense system. Indeed Japan has modified its command and control doctrine to account for the short flight time of a North Korean missile launched at Japan; Japan is well aware that engagement decisions must be made within minutes.<sup>13</sup> To some degree, the success of U.S. attempts to achieve a fully denuclearized North Korea depends upon good U.S.– China relations. Successful denuclearization also requires the other five members of the Six-Party Talks to speak with one voice in dealing with a recalcitrant North Korea.<sup>14</sup>

North Korea also poses a significant conventional threat to South Korea and U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea maintains the fourth-largest standing armed forces in the world, with approximately 1.2 million active duty personnel and 7.7 million in the reserves.<sup>15</sup> Even so, North Korea's most significant threat is posed by its ballistic missile, nuclear, biological and chemical weapons capabilities, which threaten

all of East Asia. North Korea has conducted numerous missile launches over the last four years, demonstrating a capability to target U.S. and allied forces and populations in South Korea and Japan.<sup>16</sup> A recent example was its successful launch of a modified Taepo-Dong-2 Missile, named Unha-2, in April 2009. The missile travelled over Japan and crashed into the ocean 800 miles off Japan's eastern coast. Although North Korea claimed that it was conducting a satellite launch, the trajectory and payload of the missile indicate the possibility that North Korea can deliver lethal weapons over a considerable distance.<sup>17</sup> This capability heightens the urgency for effective deterrence and counter-measures in the region. It is inherently in the best interest of the United States, South Korea, and Japan to cooperatively counter this very real threat from North Korea.

#### Emergence of the People's Republic of China (PRC)

China's political and economic power, as well as its regional and international influence, has increased substantially over the last 20 years. With a gross domestic product (GDP) of over \$5.7 trillion in 2009,<sup>18</sup> China is on a path to challenge the United States as the leading global economic power. China also has the largest armed forces in the world with approximately 2.3 million active duty personnel and one of the world's largest defense budgets at approximately \$99 billion in 2009. China's defense budget has increased exponentially in recent years with a growth rate exceeding that of the domestic economy.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, several countries are questioning the motivation for this increase in military spending. China is pursuing military modernization with an emphasis on cyber warfare, power projection, and area or access denial technology. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) continues to develop and acquire long-range bombers, stealth aircraft, cruise missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles, modern destroyers,

and submarines.<sup>20</sup> Focusing on Taiwan, the PLA has worked to develop capabilities for an amphibious invasion of the island. These capabilities include an advanced logistics system, improved command and control, and naval capabilities to challenge and delay the U.S. Navy in key areas. It also includes the development of airpower and precision-strike capability for a localized conflict.<sup>21</sup>

China has begun to integrate additional military capabilities into its strategic posture as well. These include ballistic missiles tipped with conventional rather than nuclear weapons, counter-space attack capabilities, and even non-kinetic means for damaging critical nodes at very long distances.<sup>22</sup> China continues to develop new short-medium-, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles which will be capable of reaching U.S. and allied military installations in the region.<sup>23</sup>

Tensions between China and Taiwan have eased considerably over the past year through increased trade, financial ties, and initiation of direct air travel between the two. Nonetheless, Taiwan's claims of sovereignty remain a highly contentious issue within China. Taiwan independence is a primary security concern of the PRC and the basis of much of its military modernization.<sup>24</sup> China is determined to reunite Taiwan with the mainland to restore a unified country. The Chinese regard any U.S. support for Taiwan as interference in its internal affairs. China has also accused the United States of conducting spying operations in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). In response, the United States contends that while unauthorized fishing or exploitation of seabed resources is prohibited within a state's EEZ, the zone remains open to all other regular foreign commercial and military traffic.<sup>25</sup> China's territorial claims in the South China

Sea have placed it at odds with countries in the region; these claims threaten freedom of movement in the global commons.<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, as China improves its military capabilities to ensure its security and to field a military establishment, it threatens the continental maritime balance. With its growing economic, diplomatic, and political influence, China is a major player in every aspect of East Asian security. By gradually improving its military offshore capabilities, China is beginning to establish a presence in a maritime region that has been the preserve of the United States and its allies for the past half-century. Left unaddressed, China's increasing maritime presence will upset the decades-old continental-maritime balance of power that has sustained stability in the region. The efficacy of the U.S. strategic position in the region depends upon the U.S. ability to use the seas to guarantee the security of its East Asian allies and to preserve U.S. national interests.<sup>27</sup>

The economic relationship that each nation has with China is central to the economic well-being of all parties, and strong bilateral ties with Beijing enhance economic interdependence. However, China's military modernization presents a security challenge. In recent years China has sought improved relations with countries in the region through bilateral engagement; China has conducted high-level political visits to Japan and South Korea. Also, it is active in multilateral forums such as the Association of South East Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF). Some analysts claim that China is attempting to displace the U.S. as the dominant power in the region.<sup>28</sup> Others believe that China's growing presence and interactions with U.S. allies and security partners are not fundamentally transforming the security order in the region.



However, most neighboring countries in the region are leery about China's long-term intentions regarding its military modernization.<sup>29</sup>

### U.S. and Japan Security Alliance

Since the 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, the U.S.–Japan alliance has remained critical to the security of the Northeast Asian region. The United States maintains a forward military presence on mainland Japan and Okinawa with about 36,000 troops, for whom Japan provides substantial host-nation support. In 2006 the U.S. and Japan concluded a Defense Policy Review Initiative to facilitate realignment of U.S. bases to increase their global power projection capabilities and to promote greater integration of U.S. forces and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces.<sup>30</sup> Another reason for this initiative is also to reduce complaints from local residents regarding U.S. bases in Okinawa.

As the third largest economy in the world, Japan has a national interest in maintaining a stable security environment. Both North Korea and China pose major security issues for Japan. The Japanese consider North Korea's proliferation of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles as a threat to the peace and security of Japan. Furthermore, there is concern over China's lack of transparency on its military modernization and its rapid and continuous increase in defense spending.<sup>31</sup> As in the past, Japan believes its long-term security interests are best served through a strong U.S.–Japan alliance and continued engagement and cooperation with countries in the region.

Although Japan's annual defense budget is constitutionally constrained to a maximum of 1% of its GDP, this represents a considerable military expenditure of about \$47 billion—the 7th largest in the world.<sup>32</sup> Japan's planned acquisition of a ballistic

missile defense system is designed to modernize its military incrementally without exacerbating its neighbors' fears of Japanese remilitarization.<sup>33</sup> Undertaken in the wake of China's anti-satellite test in January 2007, all of these military defense improvements and planned procurements validate Japan's resolve to meet evolving security challenges in the region, posed primarily by China and North Korea.

Japan's military spending has not increased at the same pace as its share of the global economy.<sup>34</sup> U.S. Ambassadors and Department of Defense officials urged Japan to increase its defense budget to keep abreast with the growing security requirements of the region; however, China, South Korea, and other countries in the region are very sensitive to any substantial increase in Japan's military capability. As Japan modernizes its military, it must remain aware of these regional apprehensions. Japan does not seek to initiate a security imbalance in the region that may cause other countries to increase their military power.

Even so, Japan's quest for national security may precipitate reinterpretation of its constitution. The Japanese Prime Minister's Advisory Panel published a report in June 2008 which urged revision of the constitutional interpretation on four types of activities: protection of U.S. forces on the high seas; ballistic missile defense; Japanese Self-Defense Forces uses of force while engaged in peacekeeping and other international operations; and logistical support for other countries engaged in peacekeeping and other international operations. The Panel declared that the current interpretation of the Constitution is no longer appropriate in light of the drastically changing international situation and Japan's position in international society.<sup>35</sup>

Currently the most effective security apparatus in the region remains the U.S.–Japan alliance. In order to adequately meet future challenges and to counter threats in the region, this alliance should be expanded. The Tokyo Foundation, a Japanese think tank, has advocated developing the current bilateral alliances into a network of alliances among all nations in the region with close security ties. This web-like security system will facilitate handling more complex and new kinds of challenges effectively. At the same time, it will reduce the U.S. burden for the defense of Japan and enhance security among U.S. allies in the region.<sup>36</sup> For example, initiatives such as the 2007 Japan–Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation expanded maritime training between Australia and Japan.

Japan's participation in regional security forums—such as the Six-Party Talks, ASEAN Regional Forum, and cooperation on piracy and other regional threats—will remain essential. Japan's participation in regional multilateral exercises, such as Cobra Gold in Thailand, can enhance interoperability and cooperation amongst countries in the region. Further, an expanded Japanese power projection capability at sea can assist in keeping strategic lines of communication open and enable other missions such as escort and refueling operations for the U.S. and its allies. However, these types of force projection missions are controversial; they are prohibited according to current interpretations of Japan's constitution.

#### U.S. and Republic of Korea (US–ROK) Relations

Since the U.S.–ROK Mutual Security Treaty in 1953, the United States has remained committed to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula – a commitment considered vital to the peace and stability of Northeast Asia. The United States currently maintains about 28,000 troops in South Korea to supplement the 650,000 South Korean

forces. The US-ROK forces are aligned to deter the 1,200,000-strong North Korean army that is forward-deployed along the Demilitarized Zone. Most American forces in Korea are forward-based Army personnel dispersed across the southern peninsula. The importance of the U.S.–ROK alliance was underscored by President Obama’s visits to Seoul in 2009 and 2010. The 15th largest economy in the world, South Korea has a keen interest in maintaining a secure and stable environment in the region to further its economic growth and development. Living in a state of constant tension with North Korea since the beginning of the Korean War in 1950, South Korea views North Korea as the primary threat to its national security. South Korea has been increasing its military spending over the last decade at a slow but steady rate. From 2003-2008 it has averaged an 8% growth rate annually to reach a decade high of 2.8% of GDP. South Korea’s \$27.1 billion defense budget for 2009 makes it one of the region’s major powers.<sup>37</sup>

The lack of direct dialogue between North Korea and South Korea remains as a critical roadblock. Also, South Korea’s public support for U.S. forces in Korea and U.S. policy in the region has wavered. Further, South Korea has been unwilling to cooperate on theater ballistic missile defense. South Korea has a historical animosity for Japan since it suffered enormously from Japanese aggression and brutality. This remains a stumbling block towards full security cooperation among the two countries. However, in view of rising China’s economic and military power and the North Korea’s nuclear threats, it is increasingly critical for South Korea and Japan to overcome their historical distrust and animosity. They should create a reliable security architecture with the support of the United States to confront emerging threats from China and North Korea.<sup>38</sup>

Currently, there is an active discussion between Japan and South Korea on military to military cooperation—such as Acquisition and Cross-servicing Agreement (similar to Military Logistics Support Agreement) and General Security of Military Information Agreement.<sup>39</sup> This is a prudent move for Japan and South Korea to enhance their security posture and counter military threats from North Korea.

U.S. policy objectives in South Korea seek to ensure the political and economic stability of South Korea. The United States contends that political stability and military security are crucial to South Korea's economic development, to the regional balance of power, and to the preservation of peace in the region. Although maintaining peace and stability in the region is the key U.S. and ROK objective, North Korea continues to develop nuclear weapons and advanced missile delivery systems. This would make North Korea a likely candidate for the U.S. strategic preventive strike option. A successful military operation would eliminate the North Korean nuclear capability, destroy its missile program, and possibly topple its dictatorial regime. However, the most compelling reason to refrain from immediately exercising the preventive strike option is the prospect of causing enormous casualties because North Korea is poised to launch a devastating retaliation to such an attack. With a population of over 20 million, Seoul (the capital city of South Korea) lies within North Korean artillery range. The number of non-combatant casualties in a retaliatory strike would be horrendous.<sup>40</sup>

To assure our South Korean allies of our commitment to the alliance and to the defense of South Korea, the United States must continue to maintain its strong military presence on the peninsula. Although a substantial force restructure is underway for the U.S. Army combat troops on the Korean peninsula, the joint military headquarters staff

presence in Korea should be maintained to continuously update South Korea on U.S. armed forces transformation issues that may impact future deployments of forces to South Korea. The United States should also improve its intelligence collection capability on the peninsula. Recent nuclear events on the peninsula warrant focusing substantial national intelligence assets on North Korea. However, intelligence on the peninsula should be a shared U.S. – ROK responsibility. South Korea should assume primary responsibility for sustaining human intelligence on the peninsula. The large number of North Korean defectors residing in South Korea should continue to be a valuable source of intelligence. The U.S. military intelligence brigade, with access to U.S. national intelligence assets, can integrate its collection efforts with the South Koreans to help ascertain North Korean intentions and capabilities.

The United States continues to view the stability and security of the Korean peninsula as a vital national security interest, essential to sustaining a prosperous global and regional economy. With the strong support of the United States, South Korea should also start to assume more responsibilities for the defense of its own nation. South Korea must step out of the shadow of United States. South Korea has become a stable, prosperous democratic nation in charge of its own national defense—a strong U.S. ally. With the restructuring plan of the Combined Forces Command that allows South Korea to command its own forces in the event of conflict, South Korea must increase its military command and control capabilities for securing the peninsula. This transfer of wartime operational control from U.S. to ROK forces is scheduled to be completed by 2015.<sup>41</sup> South Korea's active participation in multilateral regional security cooperation is also critical for the South's taking on a larger leadership role in the

region. South Korea's continued force modernization and its participation in multilateral exercises with U.S. allies and partners will also enhance its military preparedness and serve as a strong deterrent to North Korea's irresponsible behavior.

#### Multilateral Regional Cooperation

Over the past two decades, interest in multilateral economic cooperation and cooperative security systems has flourished in the region (see Table 1 below).

ASEAN	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand
ASEAN+3	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, China, Japan, South Korea
East Asia Summit	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand
APEC	U.S., Canada, Russia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Taipei, Hong Kong, Chile, Mexico, Peru

Table 1: Multilateral Institutions

The Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led efforts to build multilateral collaboration and cooperative security in the region. This association of 10 Southeast Asian countries has initiated several institutional initiatives, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN + 3, and the East Asia Summit, which adds to the U.S. effort to establish the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). These initiatives have encouraged a cooperative approach to address regional issues such as energy security, environmental and reducing pollution. This cooperative approach has also created a positive environment for the development of a sub-regional framework for security cooperation as relations among China, Japan, South Korea and their neighbors have improved. This positive security environment is further enhanced by the decreased possibility of conflict between the United States and China over the Taiwan issue.<sup>42</sup>

## Alternative Regional Security Architectures

*The Six-Party Talks.* As a result of U.S. efforts to prevent North Korea from obtaining nuclear weapons, the Six-Party Talks was created involving the United States, China, Japan, Russia, North Korea, and South Korea.<sup>43</sup> Through these Six-Party Talks, the Northeast Asian countries would significantly influence the security of the region since this issue-specific dialogue could evolve into a more regional and permanent structure and a joint security system in East Asia.<sup>44</sup> The creation of a collective security system such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is not plausible in near future since it would require extensive cooperation and commitment to solve many trans-national issues. Although the Plus Three (China, Japan, and South Korea) has created a mechanism that is mainly focused on economic issues, a stronger coalition could be formed if it included U.S. interests. Since the United States and Russia have substantial interests in the Northeast Asian region, it would be logical to expand the Plus Three to the five nations (the United States, Russia, China, Japan, and South Korea) who have cooperated in the Six-Party process in order to address key issues such as trade, investment, industrial standards, and energy security. This expansion would unite the five major nations in the region, so they could combine resources and interests in major policy issues such as economic, environmental, and diplomatic issues.<sup>45</sup>

*The Five-Party Model.* The Five-Party model could also create a stronger platform than the existing U.S.– China – Japan relationship and thereby ensure lasting collaboration in the Northeast Asian agenda. The Five-Party model was initially framed over China's concern about North Korean actions and the resulting breakdown of the Six-Party Talks. North Korea continues to isolate itself as it develops nuclear



capabilities with multiple tests of nuclear devices and missile launches. North Korea's actions also suggest that it intends to be a nuclear power and expects to enjoy this status in future talks. North Korea may eventually return to the Six-Party Talks due to Chinese influence; however, the five countries (the United States, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea) have other common interests that go far beyond those of North Korea. Given these different interests, such as economic stability and trade, there is no logical reason to give North Korea an implicit veto over future cooperation in the Northeast Asian region, where Pyongyang has few interests or negligible capacity to bring to the negotiating table.

This Five-Party model presents a stronger forum for cooperation than the initial peace and security mechanism that the region has historically focused on. The Six-Party Talks formed a constituent working group to explore the feasibility of curtailment of North Korean nuclear weapons program. If progress could be made on North Korean nuclear threats, to include normalization of its relations with the United States and Japan, there would be an abundant security-centered agenda for the Six-Party Talks. But the prospects for such a security mechanism are dim.<sup>46</sup>

The strongest underlying principle for security-related cooperation amongst the five nations is contingency planning, which includes managing the transition to a reunified Korea. Since North Korea continues to decline behind other economic and political powers in Northeast Asia, managing this transition on the Korean peninsula could provide a model for peaceful change. The five nations would be forced to discreetly discuss how to manage various contingencies and consensus-based responses. Although South Korea and Japan, both U.S. allies, have historically found

such contingency planning difficult, the five parties could address non-traditional security topics such as humanitarian assistance and natural disaster relief. However, including China in the Five-Party model would make cooperation more difficult since China has been hesitant to discuss contingency plans for a humanitarian crisis attending Korean unification or North Korean challenge.<sup>47</sup>

Expanding the Plus Three to five nations would make additional resources available to address various economic and transnational issues that are not relevant to North Korea. Although the possibility of North Korea joining would remain open, especially as South Korea and China would likely include North Korea if its conduct improves, the five nations have specific roles and status different from those of North Korea. The five bring essential capabilities that reflect their varied economic, environmental, strategic, technological, and financial strengths. Each nation provides assets that could contribute to a well-defined agenda. And there is a precedent: the 2004 U.S. proposal for five-party policy planning talks and Japanese proposal for a five-party Northeast Asia energy mechanism.<sup>48</sup> The trick would be isolating Pyongyang within the six-party format and helping the other five powers to become comfortable in dealing with one another over the long term within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. It is also critical for China, Japan, and South Korea to talk to each other directly rather than relaying through Washington.<sup>49</sup>

*Multilateral U.S. Alliance System.* Although the United States is committed to long-term bilateral alliances in East Asia, there is a concern that this bilateral structure, organized on a hub-and spoke military alliance system, is not well-suited to the rapidly-changing regional security environment. The new multilateral alliance system requires

changing the projection of U.S. military power from its current bilateral structure into an integrated multilateral alliance system. Beyond maintaining the current deterrence and balancing role played by the bilateral system, the multilateral alliance system seeks to limit the military influence of Russia and China and to advance the interests of the United States and its allies. To be successful, this multilateral system requires the military normalization of Japan, the acceptance of this normalization by South Korea and others in the region, and the reorganization of U.S. military forces to reflect the increased role by regional powers. This change will reduce the dependence of the allies on U.S. military power and increase the ability to respond swiftly to regional contingencies without jeopardizing U.S. global strategy.

However, this multilateral alliance system could harden U.S. relations with China and Russia, thus driving them into counter-balancing alliance. This system could also undermine many of the dialogue processes that deal with non-military security challenges. While a full transformation to a multilateral U.S. alliance system is not plausible in the near future, this system is not unrealistic and some trends are already moving in this direction. For example, Australia and Japan signed a security declaration in March 2007, and the United States, Japan, and Australia have established a ministerial-level security dialogue.<sup>50</sup> Despite some shortcomings, this multilateral U.S. alliance architecture is most likely to come to fruition over the medium term.

*Multi-Dimensional U.S. Security Mechanism.* One further evolution of the U.S. role in the region would be the gradual transformation of the U.S. presence from a bilateral military alliance into a multilateral and multidimensional security mechanism. Similar to NATO, this multidimensional institutional mechanism would include

substantial diplomatic, political, and logistical capacities along with a multilateral military alliance; thus providing collective defense of all members, peacekeeping and peacemaking functions in the region, humanitarian operations, and a political and diplomatic role.

The creation of a new NATO-like structure would involve a marked increase in the strategic role and weight of the allied countries, reduced U.S. autonomy, and a significant change in the structure of U.S. military presence in the region. This type of security mechanism might be more effective to assuage regional concerns about Japan's military normalization. Moreover, given that China's economic priorities require regional stability, the creation of inclusive security architecture should be a fundamental priority in the long term. Although the evolution of the bilateral commitments in the region into a multi-dimensional security system is fairly unlikely at present, some argue that this option presents the best long-term approach to respond to the blend of old and new challenges facing the region. Lack of support for this alternative in the short term, however, should not be misinterpreted into ruling it out of the plausible options.<sup>51</sup> The key question is finding the proper mix of "all-inclusive" mechanism, in which all states would participate, and "exclusive" mechanism that would encourage cooperation on strategic matters among limited key allies in the region.<sup>52</sup> List of countries that could be considered in this mix of multilateral- and multidimensional cooperative mechanism would be: the United States, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Australia, India (key leading nations); New Zealand, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines (supporting nations); and possibly North Korea (if willing to cooperate and participate).

## Strategic Policy Recommendations

East Asia's emergence as a principal center of global power makes this region more important to the United States than ever before. The region is already an engine of the global economy, and countries in the region are becoming global economic and political actors. To deal effectively with the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, the United States should adopt a more active approach that recognizes new geopolitical realities. This proactive strategy must build upon the long-standing positive U.S. engagement in East Asia; it must posit a vision that can advance U.S. interests and attract support from countries in the region. To effectively protect and promote U.S. national security interests in East Asia in the face of major geopolitical changes and trends, the U.S. national security policy in the region should be centered on the following six policy recommendations.<sup>53</sup>

First of all, the United States should fully endorse its commitment to the region and ensure that all East Asian allies are aware of this commitment. The United States must maintain the fundamental bilateral alliance with Japan, which is critical in managing traditional and non-traditional security issues in the region. This alliance provides a fundamental security framework for U.S. engagement in the region. The United States should strengthen this critical relationship and reaffirm its role as an ally. In addition, the United States should continue to cooperate with Japan on ballistic missile defense and transformation of U.S. forces in Japan.

Second, the United States should reiterate the strategic importance of its alliance with the Republic of Korea. The United States should strengthen the alliance to improve collaboration on and off the Korean peninsula and to enhance bilateral cooperation. A strategic dialogue would clarify U.S. interests and concerns; it would

also confirm U.S. commitment to nuclear non-proliferation. U.S. military presence in Korea must also be maintained to reassure allies that the United States is a key sponsor of peace and stability within the region. In order to enhance its military presence, Washington should make additional investments in the ROK force modernization efforts, and strengthen military relationships and interoperability with South Korean military forces through combined doctrine development and command post exercises to assist ROK forces to assume their wartime operational responsibilities by 2015 and to enhance their capabilities in command, control and communication.

Third, Washington must include Beijing as a strategic stakeholder and partner in the global security community. Currently, the United States still has the ability to influence China's choice to shape its strategic directions, and deter any potential aggression. By maintaining a strong presence in Northeast Asia, the United States can promote regional alliances and security partnerships that would help maximize the chance that China will make the right choices moving forward. This reshaping of security architecture must include the broader framework of a regional security strategy. The United States should commit to support the prosperity and stability of China; it should also increase talks on security issues, such as military modernization and maritime security issues. In addition, bilateral collaboration on trade, climate change, and energy security should be encouraged between the two countries.

Fourth, the United States should initiate more proactive diplomatic actions to mitigate and settle historical animosities between Japan and South Korea. Confidence and trust-building initiatives between Japan and South Korea need to be reinforced through cultural, societal and military exchanges, development of joint doctrine, annual

combined exercises, and non-military cooperation in real world contingencies. The United States should advocate and pursue an expanded security relationship between Japan and South Korea. Washington should convince both Japan and South Korea that a security alliance sharing equitable security responsibilities is in their national interest and will eventually lead to a more stable environment. The challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be met while suspicion and enmity are harbored over events that took place nearly a century ago. It is time to move forward. U.S. military and diplomatic efforts remain crucial to its success in building U.S.– Japan – South Korea trilateral security cooperation.

Fifth, continued U.S. nuclear protection and assurances to Japan and South Korea should remain essential for a regional nuclear deterrence regime. Reinvigoration of high-level talks with China, Japan, Russia, North Korea and South Korea should be a high priority for the promotion of an effective non-proliferation treaty in the region. North Korea's nuclear proliferation threatens U.S. security and regional stability in Northeast Asia. Efforts to halt nuclear proliferation should include tenacious pursuit of dialogues through the Six-Party Talks (or Five-Party Talks) with Russia, China, Japan, North and South Korea. U.S. efforts to support the transformation of the Six-Party Talks into a Northeast Asia security regime can foster trust among key powers and create a forum to develop cooperative approaches to their shared interests.

Finally, although U.S. bilateral alliances are vital for the security of the region, transformation of the current bilateral alliance system into a new multilateral and multidimensional security organization should be concurrently pursued to balance the demands for traditional military responses and the unconventional security challenges.

The United States should encourage a more open multilateralism among its alliance partners. Eventually, both U.S. and regional interests will benefit from the creation of multilateral security institution over the longer term. If the United States cannot meet regional demands for more effective security cooperation, then Washington risks damaging its interests and surrendering its long-held position of regional leadership to other emerging powers in Pacific-Asia.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

Throughout history, the United States has maintained a strong interest in East Asia and has maintained policies that enhance cooperation with allies in the region. Currently, North Korea is emerging as a nuclear state and threatens U.S. security interests and stability in the overall region. In order to stem these nuclear proliferation efforts, Washington should steadfastly pursue strategic dialogues with China, Japan, Russia and South Korea. Reviving the Six-Party Talks (including North Korea) will promote the implementation of a nonproliferation treaty in the region. Maintaining security assurance to Japan and South Korea and continued U.S. nuclear protection remains vital for the United States to sustain its nuclear deterrence efforts in the region.

In addition to security efforts, Washington can use diplomatic, political, and economic means to engage other East Asian nations. The United States can assist other regional nations in economic, environmental, and security challenges, which would help Washington maintain its position as a critical partner in the region. Engaging in non-traditional security efforts—such as climate change, trade, and energy security—is essential for the United States to regain its economic growth and affluence. Continuous economic growth and open markets are also critical for maintaining peace, security and stability in the East Asian region.



In order to adapt to the changing dynamics of the region, the United States should reassess its policy for the region. Washington must take advantage of the strong bilateral alliances and partnerships already in place, which are the heart of the U.S. presence and engagement in the region. The United States must build on this foundation of relationships by demonstrating greater shared leadership in the region. This cooperative endeavor should begin dialogues with partners that respect the region's trajectory and reconsider how the United States will play a strategic role in the dynamic future of the region.

Especially in the last sixty years, the United States has been constantly involved and committed to the peace and stability of the East Asian region. The United States must continue its policies of engagement and acknowledge the increasing expectations of its allies, partners, and competitors. By taking a vigorous and innovative leadership role, the United States can redefine its role in shaping new security architectures in this dynamic region. In order to enhance this leadership role in the region, the United States should also make significant diplomatic efforts to reduce the sense of mistrust and to promote a sense of common cause among the nations. Washington should also lead the East Asian nations towards multilateral security architectures and advocate multidimensional collective security mechanism for the region.

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